

College Guild
PO Box 6448 Brunswick, Maine 04011

Drama Club I

Unit 2 of 8

Clifford Odets' first play, Golden Boy, was produced in 1935, and is one of his most well-known works. (In the 1960s, it was made into a Broadway musical starring Sammy Davis Jr.!) Here, in a quote by critic Harold Clurman, is an example of looking beyond the dialogue to Odets' message.

The story of this play is not so much the story of a prizefighter as the picture of a great fight – a fight in which we are all involved, whatever our profession or craft. What the golden boy of this allegory is fighting for is a place in the world as an individual; what he wants is to free his ego from the scorn that attaches to "nobodies" in a society in which every activity is viewed in the light of a competition. He wants success not simply for the soft life - automobiles, etc. – which he talks about, but with the acclaim that goes with it promises him acceptance by the world, peace with it, safety from becoming the victim that it makes of the poor, the alien, the unnoticed minorities. To achieve this success, he must exploit an accidental attribute of his makeup, a mere skill, and abandon the development of his real self.

The excerpt below is from Odets' play Golden Boy. The play revolves around a man named Joe Bonaparte, who has an unusual combination of talents. He is a gifted violinist in addition to a fighter with enough potential to make it big. (Note that both skills emphasize the hands -- "His mitts are on his mind.") This scene features Tom Moody, who is Joe's manager, and Lorna, who is Tom's mistress and soon to be Joe's lover.

In this scene, pay special attention to how Odets is able to reveal a lot about the characters in just a few lines.

<p>MOODY: Sweetheart, the jig is up! Believe it or not, Bonaparte's a violinist. Maybe he was on the radio. I don't know what the hell he was. His old man came here and told us. His mitts are on his mind. You can't do a thing with a nut like that.</p> <p>LORNA: Won't he give up the violin?</p> <p>MOODY: You heard him stalling. This is the end, Lorna. It's our last chance for a decent life, for getting married -- we have to make that kid fight! He's <i>more</i> than a meal ticket -- he's everything we want and need from life! (LORNA goes over and slaps him on the back.)*</p> <p>LORNA: Pick up your chin, little man.</p> <p>MOODY: Don't Brisbane me, Lorna. I'm licked. I'm tired. Find me a mouse hole to crawl in...</p> <p>LORNA: Why don't you ask me when you want something? You got the brains of a flea. Do you want Bonaparte to fight?</p> <p>MOODY: Do I wanna see tomorrow?</p> <p>LORNA: I'll make him fight.</p> <p>MOODY: How?</p> <p>LORNA: How? ...I'm "a tramp from Newark," Tom...I know a dozen ways...</p>

Slow Fadeout

* Note how playwrights add instructions to guide the actors.



1. How does the playwright show the audience what Odets wants us to know about the characters?
2. How does this snippet of dialogue hook you and make you want to continue reading?
3. From reading this dialogue, where do you think the play is heading? How did Odets accomplish this?

Starting with this Unit, you'll be asked to write your own scenes. Remember that you're writing something to be performed on a *stage* not on a *screen*. Try to envision how the actors and actresses will bring your dialogue to life. Here are some questions to think about while writing:

- * Why are the characters believable?
- * How has the playwright shown their backgrounds and feelings without explaining them to the audience?
- * Are the set and props enough to support the story and also manageable for a real theater?
- * What is it about the dialogue that draws in the audience?
- * What is the motivation in writing the play -- a message or personal statement you want to convey, for entertainment, another reason?

4. Write a scene (twenty lines or more) and concentrate on revealing the personalities of your characters.
5. Reread your scene and tell us what you think will most hook your audience.
6. Which character do you sympathize with the most in your scene and why?

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes

**Appendix
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Citations:

- <http://d3rm69wky8vagu.cloudfront.net/article-photos/large/1.162647.jpg>
- http://forward.com/workspace/assets/images/articles/GB2-289_GoldenBoy_NumrichBursteinMastrogiorgio.jpg